



State of Connecticut
Latino and Puerto Rican
Affairs Commission

18-20 Trinity Street

Hartford, CT 06106

Tel. (860) 240-8330

Fax (860) 240-0315

E-Mail: lprac@cga.ct.gov

Web Site: www.cga.ct.gov/lprac

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MINUTES

LPRAC Special Commission Meeting

February 26, 2014

18-20 Trinity Street

Hartford, CT

5:30 p.m.

Commissioners Present:	Rosa Acosta, Ramón L. Arroyo, Richard A. Cruz, Isaías T. Díaz, Esq., Jay González, Lourdes Montalvo
Commissioner on the Phone:	Francisco R. Borres, Roberto Fernandez, Dr. Agnes Quiñones, Dr. Eugene Salorio, Pablo Soto, Danny Torres and Elena Trueworthy, M.S.
Commissioners Absent:	Yolanda Castillo, Honorable Migdalia Castro, Ana González, Emanuela Palmares Leaf
Staff:	Werner Oyanadel, Executive Director and Clarisa Cardone, Sr. Legislative Secretary

Tape 1 A

Chairman Cruz Good afternoon everyone and welcome to this special meeting of LPRAC. LPRAC is conducting this special meeting as a result of a decision made by all Commissioners present at Commission meeting hosted in the City of New London on Wednesday, February 19th, which due to the lack of quorum was unable conduct its official meeting and unable to make some decisions regarding important legislative issues currently advancing through the legislative process in Hartford. The Commission, therefore, stands here today to get your opinion on the following issues:

1. Minimum Wage;
2. Universal Access to Preschool; &
3. Family Child Care Providers Agreement.

I remind you that LPRAC is responsible under our state mandate to review and comment on any proposed legislation that may affect the Latino and Puerto Rican population of the state and any such recommendation shall be provided solely with the approval of a majority of the members of the Commission. The items listed in today's agenda affect in large proportion people in the Latino community and therefore we seek your guidance moving forward. The process for this dialogue today is very simple, we shall seek a motion from the commission to have the corresponding dialogue on each item and after each vote we shall move the conversation to the next item until we finish with all the three items in the agenda. When discussing each item please discuss the merits of the proposal only and not the individual. Finally, ask all your questions through the Chair – which is very important today due to the fact that many of us are calling-in for this meeting:

Chairman Cruz asked **Board Secretary Commissioner Trueworthy** to do roll call. Quorum was established.

Motion made to move the Agenda to have Universal Access to Preschool first, then Family Child Care Providers second and Minimum Wage third by Commissioner Arroyo and seconded by Commissioner Díaz, Esq.

Motion carries by Voice Vote.

Motion made to support Universal Access to Preschool Legislation by Commissioner Dr. Quiñones and seconded by Commissioner Borres.

Discussion:

Commissioner Borres asked if parents will be obliged to enroll their child starting at 3 years old or 4 years old or is it simply that it must be offered.

Commissioner Trueworthy responded that this is to provide universal access so there is parent choice that is available always so parents can either choose to enroll their children at age 3 or at age 4 or they can choose not to enroll them at all. This is a legislation to increase the school readiness slots available because the demand is always

much higher than the availability. Another point, she would like LPRAC to also advocate for this bill but also to advocate for the flexibility for the slots. Right now 90% of the slots are slated for priority school districts which is very important however some of the priority school districts because of facility issues or other issues may not be able to absorb all of those slots in a short period of time therefore if we advocate for more flexibility to go to more of the towns across the state, then the slots will be used much quicker and because there are low income children, all across the state not just in the priority school districts.

Commissioner Montalvo asked how are they going to be distributed to which town.

Commissioner Trueworthy The school districts that are currently categorized into different categories one being priority which for example, Hartford, New Britain, many of the major cities in towns that have high numbers of low income children and families or number of children that are not performing at grade level are categorized as priority and there are also competitive districts which are the suburban towns and then there are also a third category. In the past, the majority of school readiness or early childhood plus have gone to the priority school district. This bill does layout and say that 90% of the new slots would go to those priority school districts. The other 10% would be distributed to the non-priority school districts.

Commissioner Díaz, Esq. mentioned that back when we started advocating in support of education reform and the Governor passed the bill, he believes that this was a component that we advocated for back then because it was designed to help us alleviate the achievement gap or at least take steps towards that. There were studies indicating that when children receive preschool education, they feel better throughout the course of their education. That was his understanding as to the purpose behind creating all these new Preschool, PreK opportunities. While they are not designed specifically to gear towards the Latino community, we recognize the significant benefit to our community because there are students performing the worst that tend to live in the priority districts which are mostly the major cities.

Commissioner Dr. Quiñones agreed with Commissioner Díaz statement. The second point that she wants to make is that she agrees with Commissioner Trueworthy that the preponderance of the populations that are in priority school districts are either African American and/or Latino students.

Motion carries by Voice Vote.

Motion made to allow LPRAC to support the legislative agreement for Family Child Care Providers by Commissioner Dr. Quiñones and seconded by Commissioner Montalvo.

Discussion:

Commissioner Montalvo asked if in the long-term is this going to affect the mom and pops child care providers because it doesn't say if this is specifically for large child care providers or also help the mom and pops family child care providers.

Commissioner Trueworthy replied that this agreement is specifically designed to help providers who care for their children in their homes that include both licensed providers who care for children in their homes and non-licensed providers. This is for those providers who accept Care for Kids which is a subsidy to help provide care for children. What was negotiated was actually a 12% raise for the licensed providers in the homes. This is the first time that a raise is being proposed in over 12 years. It also works to try and improve quality of these programs because it asks for access to professional development, it asks for some requirement to get licensed and also some help to get a license for those who want to obtain one.

Commissioner Fernández clarified that we might not need to provide any testimony because the game plan is to send this directly to Appropriations without public participation.

Commissioner Arroyo said that this is an issue between the Department of Social Services which is the State and the Union. What influence, as a Commission, are we going to create in support of this legislation?

Commissioner Díaz, Esq. said that according to the document, it specifies that it's for child care providers specifically under the CT Care for Kids Program and it also indicates that the agreement is between the Unions and the State of CT so it is fair to say that this is involving solely the child care providers that are already members of the union or will the mom and pops be forced to join the union.

Commissioner Fernández said that the Union ran a list of all the providers that receives state money and they print a card check. Cards went out to all asking if they want to be unionized or not. Out of all the providers that got the card in the entire state, three said no. It was the unionization of the providers who get state funding which were overwhelmingly the minority kids.

Mr. Oyanadel mentioned that this is a preliminary agreement between the leaders of the union and the leadership of the CT General Assembly. What's going to happen now once the legislature approves this agreement, it's going to be pending the ratification of the general membership of the already unionized members. So basically, this will only affect already unionized individuals that are certified and non-certified.

Commissioner Díaz, Esq. asked if it's a small Mom and Pop Shop, if they want to receive any state dollars, will they be forced to join the union.

Commissioner Fernández replied yes they will.

Commissioner Montalvo said that she knows seven sisters in Willimantic that provide child care out of their homes and none of them mentioned about union cards and they receive state money.

Commissioner Trueworthy said that this is for providers licensed and non- licensed and they have to go through and accept the Care for Kids application and money from the state in order to be included in any of this. The fees to be part of the union or a member of the union got negotiated by 1%.

Commissioner Soto has worked on this program and it's been on the chopping block for many years. His concern is in regards to this increase.

Commissioner Fernández said that union dues are set contractually ½% or 1%.

Commissioner Montalvo said that if a raise goes through, union dues go up too.

Tape 1 B

Roll Call was requested for this motion. Motion did not pass:

5 Yeas: Commissioners Fernández, Dr. Quiñones, Dr. Salorio, Torres and Trueworthy, M.S.

6 Neys: Commissioners Arroyo, Borres, Díaz, Esq., Jay González, Montalvo and Soto

1 Abstention: Commissioner Acosta

4 Absent: Commissioners Castillo, Castro, Ana González and Palmares Leaf

Motion made to accept our agency's support for legislative efforts to increase the minimum wage by Commissioner Arroyo and seconded by Commissioner Montalvo.

Discussion:

Commissioner Soto said that raising the minimum wage will probably hurt more our Latino population vs. helping us. When you look at the Mom and Pop's shop looking at the wages, there is a possibility especially in CT and our unemployment is at 8.7%. This is a short term fix, not a long term prosperity.

Commissioner Díaz, Esq. They just raised the minimum wage last year. The majority of Latino businesses are small business, such as Bodegas or small factories or construction companies. This will not put a dent in the large retailers as they are not owned by Latinos in the community. He doesn't see any data that LPRAC can use to make an informed decision. This is not state specific rather this applies to the entire nation. Without any data as to how it will affect our community he cannot support this legislative proposal.

Commissioner Montalvo said that this is going to be an increment each year. It's going to be in three years.

Commissioner Borres mentioned that the number that we should be looking at is unemployment.

Commissioner Jay González said that this report is nationwide not tailored to the Latino community in the State, numbers are kind of vague.

Roll Call was requested for this motion. Motion carries as follows:

7 Yeas: Commissioners Acosta, Arroyo, Fernández, Montalvo, Dr. Quiñones, Dr. Salorio and Trueworthy, M.S.

4 Neys: Commissioners Borres, Díaz, Esq., Jay González and Soto

5 Absent: Commissioners Castillo, Castro, Ana González, Palmares Leaf and Torres

Motion made to adjourn at 7:00 p.m. by Commissioner Dr. Quiñones and seconded by Commissioner Montalvo. Motion carries by Voice Vote.

Respectfully submitted by,

Emanuela Palmares Leaf
Secretary
LPRAC Board

EPL:cjc